

Bush's Budget Fails Education

President Bush was elected, promising to "leave no child behind" in our schools. His signature reform legislation imposed unprecedented federal mandates on schools, while promising the resources to make them work. With this budget, the president breaks that promise. Education funding fares better than most areas of domestic investment, but this budget starves the president's own pledge on funding by a staggering \$9.4 billion next year, totaling more than \$26 billion since the reform was enacted. Total spending for education and training will constitute only 3.6% of the federal budget next year. Worse, real expenditures are slated to take cuts over the next five years. No wonder Republican legislatures from Virginia to Utah are already in revolt against the unfunded mandates of No Child Left Behind.

But the president's education failure goes beyond his broken promise on his own reforms. As his budget statement says, "in an increasingly complex and competitive world, the education of our children has never been more important." Our children's success requires meeting monumental challenges: the largest number of students in schools ever, the pending need for millions of new teachers, one in three schools forced to use trailers as classrooms, college tuitions soaring. Yet across the country, school budgets are getting hammered. We desperately need an education president, a president who will summon the nation to meet the challenge of educating the next generation. And here President Bush is simply absent without leave.

The following charts the gulf between the true challenge the country faces and the president's default. It illustrates how far we are from even providing the basics.

Every child should come to school ready to learn

Universal Pre-School

The Challenge	Head Start is only serving half of eligible children and Early Head Start only serves 5% of eligible children. [1] Working class families find good preschool ever more difficult to secure and to afford.
The Need	The Committee for Economic Development, formed by major US corporations, reports that \$25-\$35 billion annually is needed to ensure that all children lacking a pre-kindergarten education receive one. [2] This is less than half of the annual tax cuts pocketed by millionaires in the president's tax plan. [3]
What Bush Proposes	Bush's budget for Head Start fails to keep up with inflation, requiring a cut in actual services.

Children's Health Care

The Challenge	9 million children have no health insurance and 20% of two year olds have not been immunized. [4] And many states are rolling back eligibility for children in health programs - 25 states cut back eligibility last year, with as many as 650,000 children losing health-care coverage. [5]
The Need	The Children's Defense Fund states that \$16 billion annually would provide health care to all uninsured children in America. [6] This is one-fourth of the annual sum the President proposes to spend on developing new weapons, in an arms race with ourselves. [7]

What Bush Proposes Bush proposed a \$900 million dollar increase in the Children's Health Insurance Program - helping less than 5% of the children in need. [8]

Schools should have standards and accountability with the resources to meet them

The Challenge The achievement gap still remains large for low-income students, as well as for African American and Latino students. There are six million students on the verge of dropping out of high school, [9] and a quarter of high-school students read below a basic level. [10] Good teachers are a key to improving student achievement, but 20% of teachers retire within three years and in urban communities 50% leave the profession in five years - in part due to low pay and a lack of support from the school system. [11]

The Need A recent academic study concludes that an additional \$84-\$148 billion annually is required to fulfill the goals of No Child Left Behind and assist disadvantaged students. [12] \$84 billion is about what the president asked for in supplemental funds to pay for occupation and nation building activities in Iraq and Afghanistan this year.

What Bush Proposes Bush short-changed his own promise under No Child Left Behind by \$9.4 billion for 2005, totaling more than \$26 billion since the law was enacted. [13] He is imposing mandates without giving the schools the resources they need to meet the challenge.

Every child should attend a decent and safe school

The Challenge On average America's schools are 40 years old [14] and a building in a third of our schools needs widespread repair or replacement. [15] One in three schools use trailers or portable classrooms to house students. [16]

The Need The National Education Association estimates that more than \$53 billion is required to ensure that all schools have adequate infrastructure for internet access, computers, and technical assistance. [17] \$268 billion is needed in repairs simply to bring schools up to basic standards. [18]

What Bush Proposes Bush proposed no additional funds for federal maintenance and construction programs, leaving funding at \$54 million - just enough to build six and a quarter medium sized schools. [19]

After school programs are vital in a society of working parents

The Challenge Most school-age children have working parents [20] and up to 15 million children return to an empty house after school. [21] After-school programs have been shown to increase academic achievement, and unsupervised children have higher rates of criminal activity and drug use, but after-school programs are being cut back across the country. [22]

The Need After-school advocates, 60 House representatives and all 14 female Senators asked the federal government to provide \$2 billion annually for after-school programs. [23] \$2 billion annually over the next ten years is just over 2% of the new tax cuts the president proposes in this budget. [24]

What Bush Proposes Bush froze funding on after-school programs, not even keeping up with inflation. This is only half of the funding promised for these programs, depriving 1.3 million children of after school programs. [25]

College should be affordable for every student who earns admission

The Challenge	Tuition at public institutions rose by 14% last year. [26] 400,000 qualified high school graduates will not pursue a full-time, four year degree because of an inability to pay. [27] More than 100,000 students are in danger of dropping out of school due to increased tuition costs. [28] Even worse, college costs stop nearly half of low-income students from attending a public four year school. [29] In 1975-76 a Pell grant covered 84% of tuition at a four year public school - now it only covers 39%. [30]
The Need	A \$2.2 billion supplement would provide a \$500 increase to Pell grant recipients and prevent thousands of students from dropping out of college.[31]
What Bush Proposes	Bush broke his campaign promise to increase the maximum grant to \$5,100. [32] Instead, the president froze the maximum Pell grant level for the third straight year, resulting in a lower average grant. [33]

Lifelong Education is essential in a changing economy

The Challenge	Since the recovery began, 1.3 million manufacturing jobs have been lost — 26,000 in December, the 41st month of losses. [34] Now companies are also starting to move information technology and other service jobs abroad.
The Need	As the president says, constant training and retraining must be available in an economy hit by these global tides. [35] Community colleges, which are central to this effort, saw average tuitions rise by 14% last year. [36]
What Bush Proposes	The White House claims that Bush's budget provides resources for a "Jobs for the 21st Century" training initiative. In reality, vocational and adult education programs funding is sliced by almost 25% from \$2.1 billion to \$1.6 billion. Bush's community college initiative provides \$250 million to the nation's community colleges, far less than they lost from state cuts in the past year.

On Education, the president simply fails

The president plans to tout his education reforms and increased funding for poor schools and for special education in the upcoming campaign. But even here, much of the funding is a shell game. His budget adds money to those programs, while eliminating 38 other education programs, funded at \$1.4 billion this year — and he ignores the fact that the funding for a third of his proposed tax cuts could ensure that all children have health insurance, all eligible children have access to Head Start and pay for 100,000 new teachers. [37]

The president's priorities are clear. He will rally the nation to rebuild Iraq, at the cost of \$87 billion this year and a projected \$50 billion next year. He will not only defend his top-end tax cuts in the face of staggering deficits, he'll demand \$1.2 trillion more in cuts over the next decade, almost all of them going to the wealthiest Americans. He'll throw more money to the Pentagon, which already accounts for over 40% of the world's military expenditures. Yet on the critical challenge of educating the next generation, the president defaults. An administration that cuts taxes on millionaires while teachers are being laid off is doing grave disservice to America's future.

[1] [***How Federal Budget Priorities and Tax Cuts Are Harming America's Children.***](#)

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[21] Every Child Matters Education Fund, *ibid.*

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[24] 1 trillion over ten years. The Washington Post. Bogus Budgeting. washingtonpost.com. February 3, 2004; Page A18. & Alan Fram, The Associated Press. **Bush's Budget Taking Hits From All Sides**. February 3, 2004. & House Budget Committee, Democratic Caucus. The Fiscal Year 2005 Bush Budget: Unfair and Unbalanced. House Budget Committee, Washington, DC. 2/2/04.

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